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The Cross & the Plough



The Organ of the Catholic Land Movement
of England and Wales

QUARTERLY

TWOPENCE.

CHRISTMAS
1947

To the true of heart
a light is risen up in
darkness: Alleluia.

The Cross and The Plough

Published by the Catholic Land Federation of England and Wales
at Weeford Cottage, Hill, Sutton Coldfield

The direction and writing of *The Cross and The Plough* are entirely honorary.
Contributed articles are on the sole responsibility of their authors.

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CONTENTS

A CHRISTMAS ANTIPHON: by Philip Hagreen	1
GOD REST YOU MERRY: by G.P.	2
CHRISTMAS IN POLAND: by H.R.	2
THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS	3
REVIEW	5
BREAD OR PROGRESS: by the Rev. H. E. G. Rope, M.A.	6
RETURN TO SANITY by K. L. Kenrick	7
SIR ALBERT HOWARD, C.I.E.: IN MEMORIAM: by H. R. Broadbent	9
SIR ALBERT HOWARD, C.I.E.: IN MEMORIAM: by the Editor	10
A PRACTICAL TESTIMONY: by a Religious	11
ORDER OF BATTLE, XXXII: A Note on Ignorance	12
THE TRIAL OF MR. MANN: by Cecil D. Bachelor	13
PROFESSOR DOGSBODY ON THE PROSPECTS	15

GOD REST YOU MERRY

Come, bring in the garlands of evergreen
holly
To dangle in festoons from ceiling and wall.
Let brilliant chrysanthemums gleam in long
vases
And bunches of mistletoe hang in the hall.
Away with austerity! Who wants a turkey
Or plum-duff, or other such trifling fare?
We'll celebrate Christmas in dignified splen-
dour
By opening the tin of sardines we're to share!
—G.P.

CHRISTMAS IN POLAND

To men of good will, Peace.
Who would not rather fleece
His neighbour? Of those geese
Who is there left? Let's cease
Goodwill: Now ends the lease—
In Warsaw there is Peace.

—H.R.

THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS

LOUDER

One of Mr. Wodehouse's most successful jibes is that in which he describes how he thought he was making a very successful speech from a platform, when a man near the door shouted: "Louder—and funnier."

The long succession of attempts to make people conscious of the existence of a crisis are in the best vein of *The London School of Economics*. That superannuated outfit still has the characteristic smirk on its face.

—AND FUNNIER

Unfortunately for the Government, the mass of the people simply do not believe, even now, that there is a real crisis, and nothing in recent events has been funnier than the successive attempts of members of the urban or suburban government to put the point over. They have already used their biggest guns, which (as Mr. A. E. W. Mason says somewhere) means their biggest bores, but still they are not believed.

THE REAL HUMOUR

Prescinding from a theological point dealt with elsewhere, we do not blame the citizens. When you have educated and habituated successive generations of them to take their food for granted, you cannot expect any sudden reversion to sanity. What we are suffering from now is the misguided economics of several generations. The delusion of nationalisation as a remedy is simply irrelevant to the actual problem. It—and the workshop of the world—go down the wind together.

THE REAL REASON

The rationing of potatoes is a plain disgrace and a gross ramp. As we have informed our readers before, we grew 97% of our potatoes before the war. We have been for some years growing *twice* the pre-war acreage of them. As is not admitted, a lot of these excess potatoes are used for bread-flour, but even a season of light crops (which we do not admit on the facts) is no justification for rationing. *There is no shortage of potatoes*. For example, it is our information that thousands of tons of potatoes have been whisked away from Lincolnshire farms during the past few months. Where have they gone, and for what purpose?

THE UGLY TRUTH

The real motive, of course, is to add potatoes to the long list of articles which are obtained solely by favour of the Government. We are to be educated or compelled to this ridiculous position. A number of such articles, such as petrol, the Government is in a position, if unscrupulous enough, so to control; but others can be done without. In this case of potatoes, anyone who has a little plot of land can grow his own and tell the Government to go to hell. That is the obvious remedy. It is almost as important to tell the Government where to go as to grow the potatoes.

TRUTH ANYWAY

We are being driven to the conclusion that what is said in *The Cross and The Plough* is not without effect in political quarters. In our last issue, for example, Mr. Kenrick said: "We may yet have to plough up the thousands of acres we have covered with concrete." Soon afterwards, we were informed that the Government had instructed the Borough of Sutton Coldfield to stop work on its housing estate, and to plough up roads already made.

In our Ladyday issue, we asked pointed questions about the way certain potato growers are dosing their crops with artificials, so that they do not keep, and wangling immediate sales. *The Ministry of Agriculture* is now throwing out dark hints that farmers will be made to clamp and keep their potatoes. This will not hurt real farmers. We may remind our readers that by growing their own potatoes they will avoid the danger to health which (it is now beginning to be admitted) commercial potatoes inflict on the citizens.

BEARING ON THE SHORTAGE

We have drawn attention to the bare-faced way in which the *Food and Agriculture Organisation* is putting pressure on European economies to cut corn out of their croppings in favour of supplies from the emasculated areas. This does not prevent Sir John Boyd Orr (as in the Press of 4th November) announcing that the grain supply in these emasculated countries will be 10,000,000 tons short in 1948.

FASHION VERSUS TRUTH

The Times Literary Supplement of 30th August last had a leading article on "the reverence due to work and the soil." Goldsmith and Cobbett had favourable mention. But it is very curious how good intentions go sadly astray when fashion is dominant. The only living writer mentioned is Mr. J. W. Robertson Scott, whose work in achieving Suburbia in rural England was mentioned in an early issue of *The Cross and The Plough*. Mr. Scott has done more, probably, to delay the revival of a real rural England than any living man. His gods are those well-known ruralists, Shaw and Wells.

The Times will have to face facts much better than this.

WORDS—NOT DEEDS

We have pointed out several times that the Ministry and the Government have no real intention of developing small holdings. The point is now official. In the Ministry's *Weekly News Service* (No. 418) of 23rd September, are the following words: "For some years to come there is little hope of any great number of additional holdings becoming available." Noting the extensive desire for such holdings (which must be satisfied by the men themselves) the service strongly recommends that *County War Agricultural Committees* be consulted for DISINTERESTED advice. The capitals are ours. In view of the unenviable reputation for interested action earned by many such Committees in recent years, we strongly urge those interested to seek other channels for the necessary advice.

The setting up of a *Small Holdings Advisory Council*, announced on 27th October, means nothing, unless the Earl of Portsmouth, who is shown as a member, can jockey the new Council into doing something.

DANIEL TO JUDGMENT

Mr. J. B. Priestley, as was announced recently, has bought a farm and a herd. Like many people, he is standing from under. He seems to have been making enquiries independently of official fashion. In the *Daily Herald* of 29th September he has an article called "A Muck-mystic among the Pigs." He says:

"... And in the meantime the fertility and health of Man himself may be suffering from this rape of the earth.

"The remedy is that all farming should be mixed farming, with plenty of beasts to manure the soil, with a proper rotation of crop that will enable Nature herself to do better than any chemical works can do.

"It is well to remember, too, that whereas the beasts and the plants and the busy micro-organisms are not in business for profit and pay for no advertising, the great chemical combines pay for a great deal of advertising. Which may explain why terms like 'muck mystics' are often found in the agricultural Press."

We applaud this realism. Mr. Priestley, if he goes on so, may prove a very Good Companion in the coming rural England.

CHEESE FIT TO EAT

Cheese fit to eat has gone up from two points to twelve—an illuminating attempt by the Ministry of Food to check a surprising demand. Cheese unfit to eat—such as is rejected even by mice—remains on the ration, if anyone is foolish enough to pay good money for it. How deeply the Ministry of Food must be under the dominance of Big Business. It would be well if the British Medical Association, or some prominent doctor, took a hand.

BRAINS TRUST

Two articles, professedly on the nature of work, appear in *The Tablet* for 1st and 8th November from the pen of Fr. Andrew Beck, A.A. He has the hardihood to say: "Catholic social teaching is not opposed to mass production or to repetitive processes in industry as such."

We must not be uncharitable: the articles may have been written under obedience. They need not be discussed in detail, but they are unprimary and irrelevant.

We should like to ask Fr. Beck these really primary questions:

- 1.—What are Human Acts?
- 2.—What is the full meaning of the Church when she says: Man is made to the image and likeness of God?
- 3.—Is it the teaching of the Church that the ownership of Productive Property is a Natural Right?
- 4.—How do the answers to questions 1, 2 and 3 accord with the theory and practice of Mass Production?

We do not expect answers to these awkward questions, but they are the ques-

tions Fr. Beck should have asked himself before he started. In that case, his articles might have been strikingly different.

SADISTS

Mr. Dalton announced on 12th November that the duty on the muck sold as beer is to be raised a penny or more a pint, and spirits, on which the duty is already fantastic, are to be raised from 25/9 to about 30/- a bottle. That is, the duty is 400% on the selling price of 6/-.

Sir Stafford Cripps deprecated recently the notion that they were sadists. This is the only appropriate word for a process clearly intended not to tax, but to penalise, the poor, since price does not affect the rich.

We have referred already to the sinister teetotal interests which afflict the Labour Party. Too frequently this teetotalism is public but not private.

It is our information that the Bond warehouses are full of whisky which is not wanted by America. It remains to be seen whether it remains in the Bond warehouses or whether the Chancellor is trying to recoup his heavy losses (consequent on the heavy domestic restrictions) by releasing spirits at the higher duty. Either process is disedifying and scandalous.

IRRELEVANCE

The news that Mr. Dalton has resigned, following a journalistic indiscretion, and has been replaced by Sir Stafford Cripps, need not concern us here. What is of importance, however, is the dubious and startling irrelevance of the whole Budget. It has been caused by the deficit of £200,000,000 between our export and import totals. (Actually the deficit is much greater, but that also need not concern us here).

Now, every schoolboy knows that international debts cannot be paid by means of paper currency. They can only be adjusted by real values: that is, by goods or gold.

That is, there is no direct connection between the £208,000,000 paper raked in by this Budget and the £200,000,000 excess imports to be paid for.

No expert, or non-expert, to our knowledge, has drawn attention to this curious irrelevance.

The real point, of course, is that if we are taxed beyond the eyebrows we shall have no money left to buy imported (or any other)

goods. A nice position for *The Economist* to deal with—if it can.

EDITORIAL NOTES

In our last issue we were just able to include a hasty notice of *Mosaic of Man*, by Francis Walsh, W.F., Ph.D., Newtown Saint Boswell's, Scotland (6d.). We cannot urge too strongly on our readers the importance of this brochure. It is necessary reading and necessary propaganda.

We are glad to learn that our old friend, Mgr. L. G. Ligutti, has sponsored a new and practical farming monthly. Our American readers will be very interested. Write for details to the *National Catholic Rural Life Conference*, 3801 Grand Avenue, Des Moines, Iowa.

The Christian Farmer News Letter is to be severely practical. That is why its first issue has an admirable statement of first principles. For practice based on anything but sound first principles is bound to fail.

REVIEW

The Third Way by Wilfred Wellock (published by the author at 12 Victoria Avenue, Quinton, Birmingham. 1/-).

Mr. Wellock has reached many of the conclusions of Distributism by an entirely independent road. His work is of great importance, as confirming how an honest study of all the facts leads to a sound conclusion. Readers will remember the same author's *A Mechanistic or a Human Society*. This one does not cede to it either in importance or in point.

A hint of its quality is to be gained from his words: "Slavery is none the less slavery because it is well paid. There are many Englishmen who would prefer a creative vocation with a lower standard of living than to stand eight hours a day on a work-line for high wages" (p. 13).

Whether the men of good will reposing on the plain facts will prevail is still uncertain. But the case is ours: its contrary can prevail only by the tendentious and the unreal. That is to say, by plain lies.

The Report of the Lucas Committee on the Marketing Acts was published on 14th November. If it proves relevant to the policy of this Quarterly, it will be dealt with fully in the Ladyday, 1948, issue.—The Editor.

BREAD OR PROGRESS

By THE REV. H. E. G. ROPE, M.A.

COMMENTING on the "workshop of the world" theory so long dominating England, the *Irish Press*¹ of September 11th, 1947, was concerned to guard against any hopeful conclusions to be drawn therefrom. It did not mean to be pessimistic, far from it, yet it denied any grounds for sane optimism. The British Government had decided that Britain must grow much more of her own food. "This decision, however, has not been taken as part of a back-to-the-land movement or anything of the kind. It has been taken merely to save foreign currency, so that Britain will have more to spend on raw materials and machinery, for Britain can never hope to maintain her population at even the present standard of living on an agricultural economy." The first part of this sentence is undoubtedly true. To prevent at all costs any return to sanity, any attempt to fulfil the teaching of St. Thomas, Leo XIII or Pius XII about the land, is clearly a fixed purpose with our hidden rulers and their obedient servants. The last clause is sheer delusion, as anyone who has travelled in Portugal, for instance, can testify. Fr. Martindale did so in the *Catholic Herald* of September 19th, declaring that the happy and healthy peasantry of Portugal (whom fashion, of course, dubs "backward") enjoy among other things bread and vegetables much better in quality and cooking than the elegant clubs of London can furnish. The present standard in Great Britain is a very low one, and still declining, deficient alike in quantity and quality. The leader-writer I have quoted would find *The Wheel of Health* by Dr. G. T. Wrench enlightening. A people freer from industrialism than that of the Hunza Country would be hard to find; a healthier, better nourished people impossible. The notion that the industrial standard of nutrition is higher than the agricultural runs counter to experience, unless "higher" means more profitable to the cormorants of universal providing. Our berryless bread, disnatured and tinned substitutes for fresh meat, fish, and greens, our "dehydrated cabbage"—what is *their* nutritive value? Without a sufficiency of fresh milk sound health is out of the question. It is far

1. I choose this only as a typical utterance, ready to hand.

too late in the day to trot out the starveling shibboleth about the need of industrialism to maintain a high standard of living. To retain or rather regain a decent standard of living we need an exodus from the land of bondage (to International Finance and Revolution) to our own land.

"These are the things the people do not know.

They do not know because they are not told."

The journal quoted continues: "Less than 6% of her workers are engaged on the land, and with ever-increasing mechanisation of farm-labour, the additional numbers required to extract the maximum output from her soil will be small indeed." Even our industrial finance-bound politicians deem the numbers required will be considerable! Above and beyond that is the calm purblind repetition of the myth of the fertility of prairie farming (more honestly called land-mining), when Nature herself has repeatedly answered the most searching tests in the negative, and declared that peasant farming, the normal farming of Christendom, and China, is vastly more productive than large-scale commercialised agriculture. It is hard to understand how any Christian can regard with complacency the death of the country-folk, which the wise in all ages have deemed the death of nations, or hail "machines not men" as a sane principle. The very use of such terms as "output" of the soil betrays the invincible ignorance of your urbanist "progressive" (who will not long outlive the peasant). It seems impossible to open his mind to the plain truth that nature is *not* a factory, neither are soils or seasons to be "speeded up" to rescue politicians from their perjuries. In vain, for him, do even Government surveyors, with minute and thorough-going proof and detail, report that soil erosion and prairie farming with its "dust-bowls" are leading on to world-famine. Even if it be possible to gain his momentary attention, he will presently relapse into his wonted bleat about the "maximum output" to be secured by the minimum of men. (Would it be pedantic to add that only root crops are "extracted" from the soil?). If he could be shut up for a day or two and obliged to read,

say, *The Rape of the Earth* (by G. V. Jackson and R. O. Whyte, 1939), your "progressive" might be undeceived. It is just possible. Humanly speaking, nothing short of famine seems likely to enlighten the enlightened who, as our Holy Father deplored the other day, disdain the life of the landfolk.

The aim of Great Britain, continues the journal cited, "is to procure cheap food for her industrial workers, whether it is grown at home or abroad. For otherwise she must face the prospect of the large-scale emigration of her urban population, a decreasing standard of living, and a continued weakening of her international position. For these reasons, any suggestion of a 'back-to-the-land' solution of her problem would be regarded in Britain as a counsel of despair." We may answer that to wish an end implies wishing the means, and that the shoring-up of indus-

trialism is leading on to the lack of *any* food. From this it surely follows that *any other solution* (than the "back-to-the-land" one) is indeed a counsel of despair, except for such monsters as may reckon to gain profit and power from famine conditions.

The whole imposture of "Progress" is a direct contradiction of the inspired words, "Hate not laborious works nor husbandry ordained by the Most High" (*Ecclus.* vii, 16). Land-mining is not husbandry. A large-scale aided emigration of our townfolk, so far as this may be gradually possible, to the fields of England, would herald our country's temporal salvation. There are those who are interested, and for our sins at present have the malign power to prevent any such recovery, and millions as yet shirk the plain truth that the help of Heaven is needed to achieve our deliverance from utter ruin.

RETURN TO SANITY

By K. L. KENRICK

THE physical existence of the human race on the surface of this planet must be the most precarious form of being in the universe. The learned put its beginning at about three hundred thousand years ago—a mere yesterday—and they already see all the signs of imminent decay and dissolution. And yet we talk of it as the only thing that matters.

Some writers have the gift of making the whole of human life look like a dance of marionettes, or like something we observe through the wrong end of a telescope. At the end of "Vanity Fair" Thackeray packs up his dolls and puts them away in their box. This is a true picture. We can pack up the dollar loan, the trouble in Palestine, and even the atom bomb, and put them in a box until we want to see the show again and feel its thrills once more. Such is the power of the human soul over mere physical existence.

But to the majority of those who make public their thoughts and desires such an attitude is the last thing to be encouraged. They make a living, and some of them more than a living, by trying to persuade us that our fears, our ambitions, our schemes and plans, our indignations, our pride and greed, our disappointments, our depressions and exaltations, our glooms and our pleasures, are the very stuff of which our life, and indeed

the universe itself, is made. They try to drag even the most confirmed cynic out of his tub of detachment, and they usually succeed. We are all made to feel that we want to be in at the death. Every one of us wants to make his own particular contribution to the general clamour, although we know perfectly well that no one else is listening.

The majority of people regard the proposals we make, in a still small voice, in these columns, under the awkward and unimpressive name of "distributism," as a remote, out-of-date, and merely academic system completely out of touch with modern progressive reality. Alternatively, they class it with socialism, communism, collectivism, capitalism, conservatism, etc., as one of a number of possibilities all having much to be said in their favour, and all deserving equal consideration from thoughtful men. To us it appears merely as an unfortunate name (what's in a name?) for the economic conditions which would automatically prevail everywhere if all men came to their senses. We cannot see that men will ever do their economic best except in a framework in which they can see the fruit of their labour accruing directly to them as individuals and families. As incentive to a man to outstrip his best yet, the service of the community is

no improvement on the private profit of the capitalist, and endless adjurational harangues can only add to the general futility.

Less than twenty years ago, the advent of "The Leisure State" and "The Age of Plenty" was being heralded with a great flourish of trumpets. It was announced that all the problems of production had been solved, and that modern technology could now create an overwhelming abundance of every conceivable commodity. To-day, it is no exaggeration to say that the world does not know whither to turn for to-morrow's crust.

The mistake which these prophets made was to imagine that the industrial outburst of the nineteenth century had produced a machine which would continue to tick over and function automatically with no further application of human energy. They forgot that production is like creation—it requires a continuous outpour of fresh energy to prevent it from falling back into its original nothingness. The production of a loaf of bread requires as much purpose, industry, diligence, determination, patience, fortitude and ingenuity to-day as ever it did. The prophets of "The Age of Plenty" thought they had discovered a baking-machine which would go on making bread from brick-dust for ever provided that it was kept going by the right kind of financial jugglery. We have now learnt by bitter experience that no kind of financial jugglery will keep the machine going. If men withdraw their labour, the machine stops, and men have a thousand different ways of withdrawing their labour. They can outwit the lawyer and the politician every time.

Without professing to "know all the answers," the distributist maintains that the common-sense answer is that the man who bakes the bread should eat it. The man who wants to do any job of work for himself or for his family or his neighbour should be given all the priorities there are. Instead of that, he is always the last on the list and the most harassed creature in the community. He is forbidden to work for himself, and he refuses to work for the State. He will work to produce some real visible tangible result for himself, but he will not work for some mere abstraction like the State or the Cosmopolitan Finance Power and Transport Company. He can find no excuse for not digging

his own garden, but he can find a thousand cogent and convincing reasons for not working for an abstraction.

What the distributist says is that "Work or Want" is a law imposed by nature; it is too flagrantly unjust a law to be successfully imposed by one man on another. Men will allow Nature to bully them to that extent because they have no option; but they will not allow their fellows to do it either in the name of socialism or in the name of capitalism, because there is always a way out. Men have not always called the world in which they live a crazy world, but all are agreed on that name to-day.

EDITORIAL NOTE.—At the beginning of the Quarter, His Holiness the Pope made two important statements on Peasants and on Craftsmen. As it getting too common, the text was partially in, or absent from, the Press which purports to give news. We had hoped to give here translations of the official texts, but there has been delay in procuring them from Rome, possibly owing to the French transport strike. We hope to give them in our Ladyday issue.

THE END OF AN OUTRAGE

We have had so many hard things to say of recent proceedings in Parliament, that we have the utmost pleasure in applauding the Bill for ending the Poor Law.

We have not read it in detail, but if it does half what is promised for it, we may signalise it as the end of a great outrage on the English poor. No doubt there are snags, but the gesture is good.

The Poor Law began in Elizabeth's time to cope with the poor wretches dispossessed by that Rebellion of the Rich known to some as the Reformation.

It developed, and by the end of the eighteenth century not even the savage Penal Code of the Georges equalled the horrors of the Poor Law. Both reached their apogee in an epoch when, as we hope *The Tablet* knows, the rule of the *Gentleman* was absolute and unquestioned.

Now at last it goes: we applaud its death, and regret only its too long life.

SIR ALBERT HOWARD, C.I.E.

IN MEMORIAM

By H. R. BROADBENT

WITH the death of Sir Albert Howard we have lost a great champion. When he returned from service in India in 1931, one might have expected that, conventionally, his public work was finished and his energies would be conserved in quietude. We must feel grateful that he decided otherwise.

The commercial scientist, whether in manufacturing firms or experimental schools, had so long held the lectern and cried his wares of fertilizers and qualified overseers, that even the head-shaking farmer might be forgiven for accepting the advertisements.

Into this market stepped Sir Albert Howard, with a background which defended him from any suggestion of lacking scientific training. His history is well known. He was born in 1873 of a farming family and commenced his scientific training at the Royal College of Science. He took first-class honours in the Natural Science Tripos as a Foundation Scholar at St. John's College, Cambridge. He continued in the then conventional approach to agricultural scientific knowledge, moving in 1905 to India as Economic Botanist to the Agricultural Research Institute at Pusa in Bengal. He remained there until 1924, when he became Director of Plant Industry at Indore and Agricultural Adviser to States in Central India and Rajputana. As he was fond of relating, it was from the peasant and the pests that he learnt the way of conserving fertility and producing healthy plants of persistent strains. The fruit of his work was given to a larger public first in a joint work with his assistant in 1931, *The Waste Products of Agriculture*, and later in 1933 and 1935 through two lectures before the Royal Society of Arts. These were the prelude to many other lectures, articles and his two main works, *An Agricultural Testament* and *Farming and Gardening for Health or Disease*, in which he gave his facts and expressed his ideas. He had the gift of writing clearly on scientific matters and conveying to audiences at his lectures some of his enthusiasm. His use of analogy caught the imagination, and his rapid parry and thrust in question and answer changed in a moment the professor

into a protagonist. With a vivacity and puckish humour which must have disarmed his opponents when they met him personally, he never relaxed for one moment from his determined opposition to the use of artificial fertilizers. His solution for the problem of nutrition was an acceleration of the decay part of the cycle, which would bring material into use again for human consumption more rapidly and therefore more frequently than occurs with the usual surface decomposition. His activities were spent in publicising this feature, not only in England, but the world over. His works have been or are being translated into many languages, and the return in the form of information from other lands was circulated first of all through the *News Letter on Compost*, edited by Dr. L. J. Picton, the first number of which appeared in October, 1941. This was later replaced by a more ambitious magazine, *Soil and Health*, edited by Sir Albert Howard, first published in February, 1946.

His alliance with Dr. Picton, honorary secretary to the County Palatine of Chester, Local Medical and Panel Committees, has been long and fruitful. The Medical Testament, which was published by members of the Committees in March, 1939, demonstrated the belief that good health was tied to good food. It was Sir Albert Howard who offered them the means of providing good food, and since the conjunction of forces the committees have persistently advocated and encouraged the growth of foods with methods developed along the lines suggested by Sir Albert Howard. The culmination of the alliance can be read in Dr. Picton's book, *Thoughts on Feeding*, reviewed in the Ladyday issue of this Quarterly.

Sir Albert Howard was questioned on occasions on his attitude towards mechanisation. We have the evidence of Friend Sykes that, on large farms, it was found that men revolted against composting day after day and with large quantities of materials. To us that revolt seems natural. Composting fits into the work of the small unit, but, with the large, the multiplication of volume may be expected to produce a depressing effect on

staff allocated to the work. To Sir Albert Howard there was but one main problem—the increase of the organic content in the soil in the form best suited to the growth of plants. If mechanisation would solve the difficulties of composting in the large unit, then introduce it. It was an expedient to be accepted in the general pattern of society as it is. But beyond that he saw the end of the machine era, and, as he told the writer, “The sooner they burn up this stuff (fuel oils) the sooner we can get back to sanity.” It was his belief, too, that ultimately it would only be through starvation that this country would really appreciate the problem of living; a grim attitude which was accompanied always by sympathy for the sufferings which must come with it.

During the past few years his eyes troubled him, but through the trial of an operation and the subsequent partial loss of sight and semi-blindness at night, he persisted in his journeys and lecturing, travelling alone

SIR ALBERT HOWARD, C.I.E.

IN MEMORIAM

By THE EDITOR

SIR Albert Howard died suddenly, at the age of 73, on 20th October, 1947.

The newspapers of the time, characteristically, failed to appreciate what a figure had passed from us. His stature will increase with time, and in due course his memory will be hailed as that of one of the greatest men of our unhappy century.

He gathered round him, by the force of personality and example, a group of men who will continue to carry on his work. Among them *The Cross and The Plough*, a number of its most important writers, and, we hope, all its readers, may perhaps be included.

Sir Albert had had a long and honourable official career. No one could have blamed him if he had spent his years of retirement in repose. Instead of that, he achieved, in the last fifteen years of his life, the reversal of a strong tendency nearly a century old, a hope for our future, and an imperishable name.

and behaving as though there was nothing the matter. Such courage and will-power were of a piece with the rest of his character.

At times during his life attempts were made to persuade him to make some foundation which would carry on at his death. He persistently evaded such proposals for reasons he never fully explained. He had a great aversion from any attempt to specify too closely the methods by which compost should be made. His original procedure in India was modified for this country, and has, of recent years, with experience been altered still further. Any patented process or rigidly defined procedure would, he considered, prevent the growth of knowledge. It is possible that, in the same way, he feared the petrifying influence of any society which might be tied too much to his name. Whatsoever the reason, we must now wait to see the effect of his work and plan its continuance. That which he has done may be likened to the energy instilled into a flywheel. Will that flywheel now slow down?

The connection of *The Cross and The Plough* with Sir Albert covers nearly eleven years. It was due primarily to the good offices of Mr. H. R. Broadbent. No one could meet Sir Albert without recognising in him a delicate frame dominated by an inflexible will.

That will prevailed. His sheer achievement is remarkable. He confronted at the beginning of the period commercial interests which dominated and possessed the mind of large populations of the world. He died with those interests in full logical retreat, driven back already half-way to their base, their complete rout achieved in logic, and certain in prospect.

As we said in reviewing his last book, he may already echo Saint Thomas More—“I thank God—the field is won.” The strategy and main tactic against the enemy he completed himself. We have only to do the mopping up. It alone is a hard task. The strong points in many academic refuges will defend their illogical and barren positions to

the last, but the field is won. Our successful completion of *Operation Sanity* will be our greatest tribute to his memory, and our greatest contribution to the safety of our own future.

He was always very kind to us. Rightly, we think, he confined his official work to the one point of remaking a healthy soil. He indicated no preference or hostility for types of farm or of society. That was his job.

But it is not unfair to claim here that in his person he both saw and approved a great deal of the case of *The Cross and The Plough*.

Sir Albert, of course, was not a Catholic. But we may pay two tributes to his memory. We can continue his great work, and we can pray for the repose of his gallant soul.

He died in battle, if any man ever did. We offer this thought, with our sincerest sympathy, to Lady Howard. Our own loss we shall be slower to grasp. The work of one great man must now be carried on by many smaller men.

A PRACTICAL TESTIMONY

By a Religious (late Trainee of the Midlands Catholic Land Association).

IT is a long time since I wrote to you and you so faithfully send me the *Cross and The Plough*, for which I thank you. I am sure that if only the Catholic Land Movement, with its aims, could establish a good farm colony things would begin to shape. There is no doubt that farming to-day is uneconomic because of mechanisation and servile labour instead of land ownership. I am sure there must be many who realise that to gain the utmost per acre it needs the care of the husbandman and not a six-furrow plough. As you will see, I am back in — and I am again running a 30-acre farm. The land is light. I was compelled by the W.A.E.C. to grow out of this acreage 4 acres potatoes, 7 acres wheat. About 4 acres is for kitchen garden use, etc., and fruit orchard. The remaining acreage keeps at present 12 sheep, 7 cows and 7 young stock, 2 ponies, poultry about 60 birds. A Catholic neighbour lets me grave his orchard, about 4 acres. The

yield of my wheat, 1945, was 24-cwts. per acre (own seed sown); the yield 1946 was 26-cwts. to the acre (seed bought). It was sown by hand broadcast after potatoes, no manures of any kind being given. It was harrowed in the spring, then rolled by the ponies. The field beat anything that our neighbour, who owns a few thousand acres, could do with all the up-to-date equipment and manures. I also grow a few oats for stock, also kale and mangolds. My hay crops are well manured by liquid, two or three dressings, commencing in February. One of the leys first time cut yielded two tons per acre, with quite a good bit of clover. The field then carried stock from August to November.

My potatoes are Gladstone main crop and yield well after keeping the college of over 40 people all the year in potatoes. I sold 14 tons at £8 a ton. My seed was half bought and half first-year grown. I do this each year. My manure went on to the potatoes, together with four to six cwts. of fertiliser, National No. 2. The yield from four acres was over 30 tons. My herd is a Shorthorn one and most of the stock are young, only first calf. I buy very little feeding stuffs; cannot get it. Hay was good. Oat straws, oats crushed and beans produce an average of 2½ gallons per day. I had one outstanding heifer. She calved April, 1946, and milked over four gallons for first ten weeks, then three gallons for another ten weeks. She is still milking 1½ gallons now, and due to calve in March, 1947. I definitely maintain, from my experience, which is now long and varied, that for maximum production the small acreage of 25 acres is perfectly run by one man with an occasional help at harvest times, which in many cases could be supplied by the man's family. Our Holy Father has persistently pointed out that the only way to real agricultural prosperity and collective security lies in the land being owned by the people. “Let as many as possible become owners, not wage earners,” are his words. What better could any man do out of the Forces than farm his little piece of land in a co-operative basis with his neighbours.

Wishing your Movement the success that, please God, it will achieve, for only by a return to these principles will balance be restored and full agricultural and crafts be revived.

ORDER OF BATTLE: XXXII

A NOTE ON IGNORANCE

A CAPITAL feature of the ills which have afflicted, are afflicting, and will afflict our people is the prevailing ignorance.

And nothing in that ignorance has been more noticeable and disedifying than the complete absence of any real remedial suggestions from our weekly Catholic Press. Clearly all of them are afraid to tackle the question. No doubt this arises in part from the fact that no remedies can be suggested which do not expose their terrible silence over the past critical years.

In part, also, this terrible silence arises from the striking absence of any local lead and from the fact that the constructive social pronouncements of the Holy See have been ignored or flouted systematically here. These have been ignored or flouted for at least sixty years. The fact is beyond dispute. The evidence is too solid and substantial for that.

But our present purpose is more general and radical. The first essentials of human life are air and light. These are bestowed by Almighty God without human effort. Next to them comes food, and no one is so ignorant as not to know that it does not fall like manna from Heaven, but requires human labour. Even the Nazis, as we have said previously, knew enough not to get on their hind legs until they were sure of feeding Germany over the period of conquest.

In England the position is very curious. The problem turns, admittedly and obviously, on the availability of food, and relatively few of the people have any real conception of either the problem or of its solution. For several generations (that is, ever since money and the Best People discovered that food could be obtained by exploiting the capital resources of distant lands) our people have been encouraged to think of food as coming to them from afar by magic. By magic—but coming anyway. There has been a lengthy recent series of attempts by the Government to convince the people that this is not so. All these efforts have failed. The bulk of the people are still taking the availability of food for granted. *That is, they are still ignorant of the facts of the case.*

Everything in the current and recent social atmosphere has encouraged this super-

stition. Nothing in the current and recent Catholic Press has dissipated it. But on the contrary, everybody knows from his common sense that certain work on the land is necessary for the production of food. Why is this not conscious in the minds of men, and why is not action taken on this consciousness?

There is every indication that a species of ignorance exists, and the practical question for Catholics is whether this ignorance is culpable or invincible.

Guidance on this, as on other points, is to be obtained from St. Thomas Aquinas. In his *Summa* (I.11.76.2) he discusses *Whether Ignorance is a Sin*. He says:

"Ignorance differs from nescience, in that nescience denotes mere absence of knowledge; . . . On the other hand, ignorance denotes privation of knowledge, i.e., lack of knowledge of those things that one has a natural aptitude to know. Some of these we are under an obligation to know, those, to wit, without the knowledge of which we are unable to accomplish a due act rightly . . . There are other things which a man may have a natural aptitude to know, yet he does not know them, such as the geometrical theorems, and contingent particulars, except in some individual case. Now it is evident that whoever neglects to have or to do what he ought to have or do, commits a sin of omission. Wherefore through negligence, ignorance of what one is bound to know, is a sin; whereas it is not imputed as a sin to man, if he fails to know what he is unable to know. Consequently ignorance of such-like things is called invincible, because it cannot be overcome by study. . . . On the other hand, vincible ignorance is a sin, if it be about matters one is bound to know."

We exclude from this discussion *affected* ignorance, since it is incumbent on us to be as charitable as possible.

Now it seems clear that although all men are not called on to master the technique of farming, yet all are bound to know the essential conditions for the production and availability of food. Since food is essential to life, and whatever is essential to life a man is bound to know, since, evidently, without

food he cannot accomplish the act of life at all.

It also seems clear that men are only excused from knowing the essential conditions of food production by a sheer inability to have such knowledge.

Whence the choice is between mental defect and culpable ignorance on this primary matter. The choice is academic, since few

men would admit mental defect. Therefore the prevailing ignorance is culpable, and everyone concerned must make his peace with God as best he may—presumably by accepting, at this late hour, the thesis which *The Cross and The Plough* and the *Land Associations* have spent many laborious years trying to put over to a culpably ignorant generation.

THE TRIAL OF MR. MANN

By CECIL D. BACHELOR

MR. Mann straightened his back, threw down the spade he had been using, mopped his brow and staggered over to the shade of an apple tree, where he threw himself into a deck chair and puffed.

It was hot. Very hot. A bee buzzed, and as it buzzed Mr. Mann nodded, and as he nodded he observed a worm emerge from under a stone and begin to grow larger. Presently the worm, now as big as Mr. Mann himself, started to slither up to him. Mr. Mann shut his eyes tight.

"Hi, you! Wake up, you old murderer!"

Mr. Mann jumped. He was not used to being addressed in such a manner, neither was he used to being called a murderer. He opened his eyes and shuddered. The worm was sitting by his side.

"Go away, you miserable little worm, you," he said bravely.

"Miserable little worm! I like that," scoffed the worm. "Do you realise, you two-legged nincompoop, that if it wasn't for us worms you wouldn't be alive?"

"Is that so?" said Mr. Mann. "And how do you make that out?"

"I pity your ignorance," answered the worm. "And on behalf of all the millions of millions of my fellow worms who work day and night for your existence, I will tell you. We make the food in the soil for your food to grow on. We prepare it so that the bacteria, microbes, moulds and fungus can in turn make it available for your cabbage and potato and suchlike to consume."

"Bacteria? Moulds?" said Mr. Mann. "Never heard of them."

"Haven't you," smiled the worm. "Then you shall." And the worm gave a low whistle.

Mr. Mann jumped. In response to the whistle, from every corner of the garden came

peculiar looking shapes; hopping, tumbling over one another, crawling, running and sliding, and writhing in and out of the mass were thick white threads of fungus.

"Death to the man! Death to the man! He kills us. We'll kill him!" they chanted advancing steadily towards their victim.

"Stop! Stop!" yelled Mr. Mann in terror.

"Steady, boys," said the worm, "don't frighten the old boy out of his wits until we've told him what we think of him."

"Yes, and I want a word in the proceedings, too," put in a sickly looking cabbage staggering on the scene.

"So do I," roared the apple tree, waving a knobbly branch menacingly under Mr. Mann's nose.

"We all do," sang out the potatoe, the tomatoes, the beans and all the garden produce which had suddenly joined the jostling throng.

"Let the trial begin, then," said the worm. "Fellow workers," he said, addressing the seething mass of bacteria, moulds, microbes and fungus, "we have before us a man, just one example of that peculiar ignorant creature so far removed from Nature that he thinks himself the only living organism in the universe, a man who, either in ignorance or out of spite, or greed—we know not—kills millions of us soil workers every season. This man," went on the worm, warming to the subject, "works, and works hard, on his land in an endeavour to grow himself and his family food. He digs and he hoes, he rakes and he weeds, and does everything except grow food!"

"I protest!" shouted Mr. Mann. "It's a lie! I do grow food. Look at my cabbages. What's wrong with them, I'd like to know."

The worm called the sickly cabbage to the front of the meeting.

"Observe this cabbage," he said. "A glaring example of malnutrition. Not only is it in a poor way, but it is being eaten alive by moth, aphids and all sorts of other pests. And this is your doing, Mr. Mann, and yet you wonder why, when you eat this cabbage, that you have internal pains and have to swallow half a drug-store after every meal."

"Why is it my fault?" asked Mr. Mann. "I put enough fertilisers into the soil to grow good cabbages."

"Listen, you murderer," frowned the worm, "and I will tell you why it is all your fault. My particular diet is withered vegetation spiced up with a nice drop of animal matter. Do you ever allow me to have a nice square meal? By heck, you don't! You rake up every bit of vegetable matter and burn it, and you don't keep animals. No, don't interrupt, please. What I have said is true and you know it. Now then, if I can't have a square meal, how am I to prepare a meal for all my allies," he swished his tail round to embrace all the assembly, "in consequence they can't grow and multiply to make food for the cabbage. Now all this is very bad, bad for us and bad for you, but the crowning evil is, not being satisfied with starving us, you deliberately set about to poison us. Instead of giving us food, you pour evil, deadly chemicals into our homes—which you call the soil—and kill us by the million. This is your gratitude for all we do for you."

"Kill him, too!" cried the assembly. "We'll have our revenge!"

"All in good time," said the worm. "I haven't finished with him yet. To proceed. You think that we thrive on that poisonous stuff you call fertilisers? Well, if that is so, why don't you eat it yourself? Why sit down to a nice tasty meal of, say, steak and three vegetables, when you could get all the nourishment from a spoonful of chemicals? That's different, Mr. Mann, isn't it? Of course it is. Your tummy isn't designed to consume crude chemicals; well, neither are ours. Right, then. Now, having starved and poisoned us soil workers and consequently starved and poisoned the cabbage—or whatever else you are trying to grow—you wonder why the aphids, the moth and other things attack your plant. I'll tell you, Mr. Mann.

They attack it and eat it because they like sick vegetation; they are fulfilling Nature's laws of getting rid of a dying plant. You, in your simple ignorance, don't know this, so you go one step further and drown the poor thing in more poison—by a spray this time—and complete the round of destruction, the pest, the plant, the worms, the bacteria, the moulds and the fungus and, in due course, yourself. Alas, what ignorant fools men are! Give us worms food and we will see to the rest."

"He's guilty of all he is charged with," boomed the apple tree. "Look at me. I'm suffering from every form of pest and disease, all because I'm starved. And look at the poison he's sprayed on me this afternoon. I'm aching in every limb through it."

"Kill him! Kill him!" roared the crowd.

"Most assuredly he will die," said the worm. "But he will die the death he meets out to us. He likes his artificial fertilisers—he'll have them. Right you are boys, get going!"

In a flash the whole crowd besieged the garden shed, and in a second were hauling across bags of sulphate of ammonia, muriate of potash, superphosphates and hosts of other poisons.

"Over here, boys!" shouted the worm. "Open his mouth and pour it in. Drown him in it. Bury him in it. Spray him with it! Show no mercy!"

A branch of the apple tree swooped down and held Mr. Mann fast as the multitude advanced upon him. He tried to shout but no sound came. He struggled, he squirmed, and something beneath him collapsed. He opened his eyes. He was lying on his back under the apple tree on top of a broken deck chair. And the bee continued buzzing.

Across the lawn the old gardener trundled a barrow full of leaves.

Mr. Mann sat up. "Hi!" he called, "where are you taking those leaves to?"

"I'm taking them to the incinerator, as you told me."

"Well, don't," said Mr. Mann. "Tip them under this apple tree, and don't you ever let me catch you burning them again."

The old gardener scratched his head and shook it sadly. "He's screwy!" he mumbled.

And Mr. Mann distinctly heard the little worm behind the stone chuckle.

PROFESSOR DOGSBODY ON THE PROSPECTS

AS my readers know, the British Association meeting at Blackpool in 1936 had been a great shock to Professor Dogsbody. The hideous blasphemies against the machines there uttered by apostates brought on a high fever from which he barely recovered in time to accept the challenge of the Ploughing Contest in 1938. The immersion in the cess-pool which he then suffered, while (it must be admitted) he was trying to pull a fast one on young Hodge, had even more lasting consequences. He had not left his bed for some years.

I was advised that if I wished to see the Professor alive, an early visit was indicated.

I found him enfeebled and greatly aged, and the signs of suffering and resignation on his face were very affecting. "Come, Professor," I said, "this is no time for illness and despair. Your machines played a great part in the war, and the Best People prophecy still more for them in peace."

"How can you speak so callously of that dreadful slaughter?" he quavered.

"Slaughter," I said in some surprise, "surely it was not to be compared with the shocking slaughter of the first war, and you bore that with exemplary fortitude."

"Don't trifle with me about men and women," snapped the Professor with some return of his old fire. "I mean the shocking slaughter—sometimes the mutual slaughter—of machines. Scarcely a day passed but some perfect young specimen was dashed to earth, or some great tank was bowled over by a rocket. Not only so, but the master machines, those that make other machines, were disgracefully overworked, sometimes bombed, and now are in danger of rusting from disuse."

"That must certainly be distressing to one of your sensitive feeling," I replied, "but why fear for the future? Surely there is no reason for despair. Some of the most influential Catholic papers and writers speak of your ideals in terms of the utmost respect."

"You understand neither my own problem, nor that confronting my world," rejoined the Professor with dignity. "During my illness I have had leisure to make my soul

and not long ago Our Ford assured me in a vision that in my next incarnation I shall be raised to the dignity of a very large Power Press. But what is the use of that," demanded the Professor peevishly, "if nobody wants Power Pressings any more? I shall be, so to speak, contracepted before I am milled."

"True," I said mildly, "but then you started the practice on the ground that there were too many men for your machines. If they decide that there are now too many machines for the men, you can have no grievance on any ground, much less on those you have always taught."

"That may be so," said the Professor despondently. "I suppose it is the same for all kinds of eyes and teeth, even the best steel ones. But I should never refuse to accept martyrdom for my religion. What depresses me is the lack of future for that religion as a whole. As I have told you often, in the beginning were the Banks. The machines are their only begotten sons. Now everybody is talking about controlling Banks and Bankers, and even proclaiming the blasphemy that money should be made by the Prince. If they get away with that heresy, they will be able to decide for themselves whether they will have machines or not, and surely, after this experience, there can be only one course for their own advantage. They at least won't want any more of this kind of war."

The Professor paused to take breath, and I interjected swiftly "You assume that men will follow the principles of their being when they have seized control of money. What is there in anything they say and write to make you think so?"

"Perhaps you are right," said the Professor, brightening. "I of all people should know that they have no common sense. They will start all over again—and I—I shall be a Power Press turning out an important part of an all-metal bombing plane in one operation. Let me see, at an 8-hour shift and a suitably speeded-up feeder, I could manage two hundred and fifty a day. If overtime were insisted on . . ."

He dozed at this point, and I was about to tiptoe from the room when he woke and said fearfully, "But I have not told you the worst. Sit down and let me tell you."

"The machines and I are being found out. As I heard a rude man say the other day—we have been rumbled."

In this present crisis, even the politicians are not talking about the shortage of machines, but about the shortage of men. They seem to have realised that a machine only works when it is fed. Strange that this elementary point should have been veiled from them for so long.

Now you must understand, young man, that the food of the machines can only be produced by the hard work of mere men. The movers need coal, which by some oversight of Our Ford is in thin seams a thousand feet underground. Machines can do little to get it, men are needed. Then the lathes and presses and millers want iron, steel, copper and tin. All of these require hard work. Even the organic material of plastics needs to be grown and harvested by men."

"Do you see what I mean," he sobbed. "My lovely machines can only work when material is got and brought to the spot. That means either that they will rot, or mere men must be made slaves again."

"Surely," I protested, "the atomic . . ."

(He—I will not say he leered, but it looked rather like it).

"Don't you realise," he whispered, "that in spite of the spate of nonsense talked by journalists who call themselves scientists, no knowledgeable man will promise any hope of atomic energy as a motive power? The dangers outweigh the gains, even if an atomic machine were invented to-morrow. The sterilising effect of radio-activity will ensure that there is no third generation to feed and work my lovely machines—and anyway, coal and iron will still be wanted."

"But I have trust in Our Ford," he concluded piously, "Our Ford, who art in Industrialism. . . ."

I left him to his dying devotions.

This column was laughed at a little at the time; it is laughing a lot (though sadly) to-day.—A.P.H. in *Punch*.

TWO POINTS

Organic Gardening (U.S.A.) in its October, 1947, issue, has two points of particular interest to our readers.

Some time ago, we indicated the alarming dangers of D.D.T. They are now brought to a focus. A correspondent in Venice, California, writes:

"My neighbour was sold D.D.T. as a cure-all. Well, ants sure love their aphids and a lemon tree is an excellent host for aphids. So he painted the trunk of the lemon tree with D.D.T. to eliminate the ants. Well, the ants are gone, and so is the lemon tree. The D.D.T. killed the life-giving bark.

On another page, an article entitled "So now we know" is reproduced from the *Compost Society Magazine* of New Zealand.

In this article is described a visit paid by a number of interested persons to some Bowling Greens Research plots. A Mr. E. Bruce Levy, Director of the Greens Research area, said: "In greens where you want hard-wearing properties, there must be present a certain amount of dead fibre near the surface. The fibrous mat is produced by acidity, *which keeps down the fertility of the green*" (The italics are ours). Mr. Levy added that "after many years of experiments it had been concluded that the most satisfactory treatment for greens was 6 cwt. of sulphate of ammonia and 2 cwt. of superphosphate per annum per acre, applied at two-monthly intervals."

It would be a pity to comment on this bland statement, although the *Compost Society Magazine* does so effectively and at some length.

Incidentally, it appears that this system "destroyed the worm population."

As an advertisement for sulphate of ammonia, that standby of the tinkers, the article could not be bettered.

A Priest writes: I have been busy of late building a goat-shed, and the noble beast is now in residence, and giving us an abundance of good milk, and about half-a-pound of butter a week. Judging by the taste, I wonder what our benign Government have been passing off as butter for some years. I also have a hive of bees ready for next year.